Clasue 1, the Enacting Formula and the Title were added to the Bill.

DR. A.K. PATEL: I move:

"That the Bill be passed."

The question was put and the motion was adopted.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

Price Policy For Copra and Raw Jute

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): Madam Vice-Chairperson, I want to announce the minimum support prices for Copra and raw jute.

I. Minimum Support Price for Copra for 1998 Season.

The Government of India has fixed the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for Fair Average Quality (FAQ) of Milling Copra at Rs. 2900 per quintal and for FAQ variety of Ball Copra at Rs. 3125 per quintal for 1998 season. This marks an increase of Rs. 200 per quintal in MSPs for each Milling and Ball Copra for 1998 season over their respective MSPs for previous year. The increase in MSPs is expected to induce the copra growers to invest more and raise the productivity and production of copra.

The National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd. (NAFED) would continue to act as a nodal agency to undertake the price support operations for copra.

II. Minimum Support Price for Raw Jute for 1998-99 season.

Similarly the Government of India has also fixed the Minimum Support Price for TD-5 grade of raw Jute for Assam for the 1998-99 season at Rs. 650 per quintal. This marks the highest ever increase of Rs. 80 per quintal over the MSP announced for previous season. The MSP for other varieties and grades of raw jute will be fixed in the light of normal market price differentials as compared to TD-5 grade.

The Jute Corporation of India (JCI) would continue to act as a nodal agency to undertake the price support operation for Jute for 1998-99 season.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): Before me there is a list of Members who would like to seek clarifications.

SHRI JOHN F. FERNANDES: Madam, what about the statement on the cyclonic storm in Gujarat, Maharashtra and Rajasthan?

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): Your name is there for seeking clarifications on the statement regarding price policy for copra and raw jute; and statement regarding cyclonic storm.

SHRI S. RAMACHANDRAN PILLAI (Kerala): Madam Vice-Chairperson, the minimum support price fixed for copra is far below the cost of production of copra. This will not solve the problems of the peasantry. This will only aggravate the problems of the peasantry. The Kerala Agricultural Production Commission have done some homework. They have come to the conclusion that the cost of production of one coconut will be Rs. 5.53. On the basis of this calculation, actually 677 nuts are required to make one quintal of copra and other processing expenses. So, the cost of one quintal of milling copra will come to Rs. 4,160. Now, the Minister has fixed it at Rs. 2,900.

This is far from the cost of production. As far as ball copra is concerned, eight months are required for making ball copra. Actually, if you take into account the interest at the rate of twelve per cent for eight months, the entire cost of one quintal of ball copra will come to Rs. 4,373/-. That also is far below the cost of production. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the minimum price is fixed taking into consideration the cost of production of coconut in the present year. I also want to know from the hon. Minister as to how the cost of production is calculated.

If you look into the producitivity level of different States, you will find a wide variation. Even though Kerala started the coconut cultivation and the name of the State of Kerala is synonymous with coconut, now, the other States have started producing it—Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra, Orissa and West Bengal. Because of the root wilt disease prevalent in Kerala, the productivity of coconut is far below the national average. So, I want to know from the hon. Minister whether his Ministry has taken the all-India average into account while fixing the support price. The all-India average will not solve the problem of the pesantry because of the low level of productivity and also because of the presence of the root wilt disease. There is one more important thing. The price is fluctuating and a lot of import is there. Copra is being imported and edible oil is also being imported. But all these imports are at the time of the harvesting season. Why? This is done to benefit certain sections of traders and industrialists. The import is not made at the time of lean season. If import is allowed at the harvesting season, what is the effect of it? The effect would be that the price will further fall down. This is what is really happening. This is also aggravating the problem of the peasantry, particularly, the coconut peasantry in Kerala. The hon. Minister is well aware that the coconut cultivation is intimately connected with the life of Kerala, the economy of Kerala. Will the Government pay special attention to the problems faced by the coconut peasants in Kerala? Thank you.

SHRI M.P. ABDUSSAMAD SAMADANI (Kerala): Sir, as has been pointed out by my colleague, Shri Ramachandran Pillai, we are pained to say that the support price fixed by the Government is not sufficient. It is a pity that the problems of the coconut farmers of Kerala are not given serious consideration by the Government and they are remaining as they were. The demand of the poor coconut cultivatiors of the State of Kerala remains a cry in the wilderness and a proper attention is not being paid to the problems facing the coconut farmers. The coconut cultivation is the backbone of the economy of Kerala.

Now our request to the Minister is that at least Rs. 5,000/- is to be fixed as the minimum support price. Then only, in the present circumstances, the coconut cultivators of Kerala will be able to stand on their own feet. Madam, the cost of production has gone up. The expenditure has gone up. Now it is not as easy to produce coconut as was in the olden days. The labour cost is high. There are a number of other problems; I am not going into the details. I am just taking two minutes more. I would like to emphasise two points. One is, we have always been requesting for making a provision of subsidy for coconut farmers. In various other fields of agriculture, subsidy is provided by the Government. I do not know why the Government is deaf on this demand. It is very important for the economy of Kerala. It is important not only for Kerala, but for many other Southern States also. We are emphasising Kerala. As is already opined by our hon. Member, Kerala is very much connected with conconut cultivation. Even the very name, the Kerala culture, every thing, is very much related with coconut trees. So, the subsidy has to be provided.

Another thing I would like to emphasise here is, an intentional propanganda is going on against coconut and coconut oil at the international level. There are some vested interests working behind it, that coconut oil is causing cholesterol, that it is harmful for health. It is a very intentional propaganda. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the Government is aware of this propaganda being made at the international markets, at the international level, against our own products, especially coconut and coconut oil. Instead, they are trying to import other artificial oils. People in the State of Kerala are using this coconut oil from time immemorial, and such diseases have

never been reported. Now also, it is not scientifically proved. So, my last and the foremost request to the Minister is that something is to be done urgently against the international propaganda in respect of our coconut and coconut oil. Thank you, Madam.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI (Kerala): Sir, my colleague, Mr. Ramachandran Pillai, has explained the whole thing in detail. I don't want to repeat the same. I expected of the hon. Minister, Shri Som Pal, that, as a friend, he would make us happy, but unfortunately, he had disappointed everyone from Kerala! Sir, I want to have a clarification. What is the rationale behind fixing this price? Our experience shows that there is no relation between the cost of production and the fixation of price. Once you fix a price, you should fix it somewhere near the cost of production. But unfortunately, it is never fixed near the cost. I know, the intention behind that is to protect the coconut growers who are closely related with the economy of Kerala. Lakhs of people are dependent on that. The only point I am making is, you fix the price a little higher, a remunerative price.

The import of Copra or its trading shall not be allowed in certain seasons because that can fluctuate the market. Sir, you are monitoring the system to maintain the pricelevel. It is inevitable in certain areas. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether he will look into the matter and (a) increase the support price and (b) maintain a remunerative price level, by prohibiting certain unwanted methods adopted by the industrialists which can pull down the price.

SHRI H. HANUMANTHAPPA (Karnataka): Madam Vice-Chairman, Kerala copra is different and my copra is different I don't know as to what actually happens. We have discussed the Budget in the last two days, saying that it is farmers' Budget, it is in favour of farmers, it is a rural Budget, and everything. We have used rituals, we have used big words in the last three days. Som Pal is the champion of farmers, agriculturists' I don't know what happened. Somebody said, "This is not agriculturists Budget. This is *Babus*' Budget"

I don't know what it is. He was an agriculturist when he was sitting here. Now he has become a babu. He has gone by the advice of the babus. Actually support price is given to stop distress sale and help the farmers. I don't know whether the babus have verified the market rate as on today. If the support price is far below the market price, can it be called support price? If you announce the support price, the rates will fall down because the Government recognises only that rate. This is the logic behind it. I don't know on what basis, the Government has come to this conclusion. Today's market rate is more than what you have announced here just now. Mr. Ramachandran Pillai has given the calculations of individual conconuts in Kerala. kerala produces coconut by irrigation. They do it by natural rains. They are lucky. They are getting enough rains. I come from a dry area, a drought-afected area, where we grow coconut by lift irrigaiton taking out water from 200 feet or 300 feet. You have increased the price by Rs. 200. Ours is ball copra which is used for eating purposes, for your *idli-chatni*. Mr. Kumarmangalam has gone away. His *sambhar* becomes more tasty when he uses copra. There is a difference between the copra of Kerala which is used for producing oil and the copra of Karnataka which is used for edible purposes, in dishes. The rate difference is only Rs. 200. It requires eight months' natural drying. I am sorry, you have taken charge newly. As a farmer, you have rightly sought the opinion of the farmers. But I think the babus have overruled the farmers' opinion and advised him from the babus' angle. This is what has happened. There is one more point which I want to bring to your notice. Will you stop imports? Don't give support price. Don't give subsidy. But stop the imports. Why is there this

double standard? If we have not done it, it is a mistake. Why don't you do it? Stop the improts. You withdraw the subsidies or the support pirce. Automatically the faremrs will get the benefit. On the one side, you import and create competition and, on the other side, you give support price and subsidies. Please stop it. You have made a mention about the 1998 season. In the case of copra we have two seasons. I don't know whether the babus know it or not. The next season is coming. I hope by the next season the farmers' views will be reflected in your support price as far as possible. You have picked the Agriculture Ministry as an expert in the agricultural field. But if you go by the advice of the babus, God save the farmers.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): Do you think that Mr. Som Pal is going to be overruled by the babus?

SHRI H. HANUMANTHAPPA: You were yourself a Minister. So, I don't want to disclose. We had discussed the IDPL.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): I was saying something real. Is it possible in the case of Mr. Som Pal?

SHRI H. HANUMANTHAPPA: He has to get accustomed.

DR. BIPLAB DASGUPTA (West Bengal): He is saying that Mr. Som Pal is himself a babu.

SHRI H. HANUMANTHAPPA: No, no. I don't agree. Don't put your words in my mouth. Mr. Som Pal is a farmer. But he is unable to overrule the babus. That is the difficulty. I request him to come nearer to the market price by the next season, if he is attempting to help the faremrs who are in distress. You don't know that today coconut is sold at Rs. 2. Farmers are crying. Faremrs died in Vidarbha in Maharashtra. Cotton farmers died. Now the coconut farmers will go to the extent of committing suicide, if the Government does not take note of these things. Therefore, I request the Government to revise the support price announced today on the basis of facts and the reality.

DR. BIPLAB DASGUPTA: Madam, the four speakers who have spoken before me have talked about copra which is mainly produced in the southern part of the country. I am talking about the prices which have been annoucned for raw jute. Jute is produced in West Bengal, Orissa, Assam, Tripura, Andhra Pradesh and Bihar. Fifty lakh people are working in the jute industry and 40 lakhs of them are producers of raw jute and ten lakh people are associated with jute processing. If we multiply 50 lakh by five, 2.5 crore people are dependent on jute. The jute prices affect the life and livelihood of a vast majority of the people in the eastern part of India. That is the situation. I have been following this announcement of CACP for the last so many years. But I have never understood how they work out the cost of production. I think there is a lot of confusion in it because raw jute is produced under different ecological conditions in different parts of the country. madam, they do certain amount of averaging. But how they do the averaging, I do not understand. may be, they collect figures from three or four different samples. How exactly they do it, it is not clear to me. But whenever the prices are announced; I talk to the cultivators. They give an estimate which is totally different from the estimate which is prepared by the Ministry. This time also the Kisan Sabha in West Bengal has worked out an estimate. Their estimate comes to between Rs. 900/- and Rs. 1000/- and that should be the minimum. I communicated this estimate to the Minister. Then a delegation consisting of the Kisan Sabha representatives also met the minister. I understand that the West Bengal Government also made some estimates. Their estimate comes to Rs. 850/- or something like that. But the price which has been mentioned here is Rs. 650/-.

On what basis has this price been given? Infact, one of the terms of reference of CACP says that it should also cover some margin, a minimum cost of production. There should be some margin so that they can get sufficient return. Then only they will be interested in investing in this particular crop. My feeling is that Rs. 650/— is nowhere near the cost which our cultivators in West Bengal have estimated. This figure would be creating a lot of dissensions in West Bengal. There is no doubt about it. I would like to know from the hon. Minister. On what basis has he calculated this price? Is there any standardised procedure for averaging estimates? In different parts of the country there are differnt ecological conditions. Unless it is done, unless the figures are beyond any doubt, it is extremely difficult for us to talk to cultivators about these prices because they would say that the prices which have been announced were far lower than the actual price at the ground level.

Then the second issue is this. After the price is announced, do the farmers actually get that price? Our experience is, they don't get it. The Jute Corporation of India intervenes in the market after a very long time. JCI intervenes at a time when raw jute is not in the hands of the actual producers, but it is in the hands of middlemen. So it is the middleman who gets the benefit from whatever price that has been declared. Moreover, there are few centres where raw jute is sold. When the JCI goes to those centres, the amount of money they carry is exhausted within a very short time. Many of the cultivators who come there, cannot sell their jute to the JCI. They sell their jute to the middleman at a very cheap price. Madam, there must be some coordination between CACP and JCI. If JCI does not purchase raw jute in time then the whole purpose of having a minimum support price is defeated. This is what we experience year after year. We find that the raw jute producers do not get a fair deal. But some other people are getting benefit out of it.

My next point is about the prices which are quoted by CACP and then they are made official by the Government. In some of the years, as my friends have pointed out, we find that the CACP prices make no sense because the market price is much higher. But they don't bother about it. JCI has a large manpower and a very huge staff. Why should it remain idle in those years? Why should not JCI also participate in these activities? JCI can have one objective of mimimum support price. Another objective could be where the mimimum suport objective has been achieved to work commercially so that JCI remains viable, its apparatus is fully utilised and its jute factories also get jute whenever they need. So, this kind of issue has not been properly handled by the Government, I think. But there has to be a much better coordination between the jute grower and the factories who are requiring jute. Through JCI, there can be a possibility of holding a buffer stock which can be sold to the factories, maybe some factories which are smaller and all that who cannot get jute in those times when the prices are too high. So, I would very much like the Minister to respond to these two points. First is, how the price has been calculated? What is the mechanism? What is the procedure? Is the Minister himself satisfied that the price given to the agriculturists has been calculated fairly and propoerly and that the figures are beyond doubt? Secondly, how can one ensure that there is a link between the price declared by CACP and the price actually obtained by the farmers at the grasroot level? This is also not happening.

SHRI SOMPAL: Madam, I thank the hon. Members for taking keen interest in the prices of copra and jute. Really, it is a sad state of affairs. Terms of trade have always been against the farmers. During the whole period of British rule the policy of the Government was to supply cheap food to the organised and vocal sections of population and cheap raw

material to feed British industry in India for making semi-finished goods back in England and selling them back to India after value-addition. To some extent the policy has been continued since 1947. If we have a look at the historical graph in terms of trade, I find that if I take 1980-81 as the base year till last year 1995-96, rather a year before, the terms of trade have been havering between 84-94 per cent as compared to 100, barring three initial years of 70s, i.e. 1971-72, 1972-73 and 1973-74. Then it was in the vicinity of 100. This implies a skewing of incomes in agriculture as against other professions by 12 to 12 1/2 per cent every year. This is halving of rural incomes received by agriculturists evry 7-1, 7/2 years. Through this subtlety of price mechanism, on a large scale, resources have been transferred from the rural sector to the urban sector because it is price mechanism which decides the devalution of fruits of all enterprises including agriculture. The basic problem has been that agriculturists, the farmers are a disorganised or unorganised lot. They do not have the bargaining capacity. Their holding capacity is low. The gestation period between investment and receiving of income at harvest time creats and complicates farmers' problems because all investments, and domestic consumption expenses, the meter is always on and when the harvest arrives his tolerance level gives way and he is forced to make a distress sale and this has been taken advantage of by unscrupulous traders and exploiters. This was repeated even after independence. But, for the first time in 1986, the system of mimimum support prices was instituted in India. A calender has been fixed since then and fortunately I had been associated with that exercise, though I was not a Member of Parliament then. The then Finance Minister, Shri V.P. Singh was approached by a delegation, headed by me, and I supplied a paper and then he came out with a long term price policy which was placed on the Table of the House, I think on 13 November, 1986, fixing this calender and 22 commodities have since been identified to provide support.

In case of copra this exercise started quite late. The issues which have been raised by the hon. Members are very important. It shows their concern about farmers' plight. I must confess to them candidly that the situation is far from satisfactory, even in the present year, so far as MPs are concerned.

CACP has adopted a formula. It generates data to calculate the cost. There is a complete formula. If the hon. Members are interested, I can give the details thereof. There are certain steps which it has identified—cost A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2, and C3. These are the steps. The direct input costs, the imputed rental value, the labour cost, the imputed labour of family and certain other costs, including imputed rental value—not the rental value paid to the Government, but the other value—but interestingly, excluding the interest on price or value of land. This is a big and serious lacuna. There is a dichotomy that BICP, which calculates the industrial costs, adopts the value invested by way of fixed capital and working capital, while in the case of agriculture this is excluded. But this is a matter or policy. We have inherited a legacy, including baboodom. And it is very difficult to undo these things in a day. But we are moving towards a direction and I must inform the august House and all the Members that the hikes affected in these cases are really substantive. In case of jute, this is the highest ever hike, not only in absolute terms but in percentage terms also. And my Communist friends were supporting the earlier Government, they accepted these prices for the past two years. I have got that report. And I don't know whether anybody raised any objection.

DR. BIPLAB DASGUPTA: On this point, let me point it out. No matter which party had been in power, we had been making these complaints year after

year. So, it is not simply the BJP Government that we are raising the issue with.

SHRI SOM PAL: Madam, the question is not settled by making complaints. Our hon. friend, Mr. Jethmalani, was saying something, describing that symptomatology doesn't help, but what is important is whether you have protested to the extent of having an action taken on the phenomena.

I have the record. As compared to 1993-94, the 1994-95 rise was only by 4.4%, the 1995-96 by 4.3%, the 1996-97 by 4.1%, the 1997-98 by 11.8%, from Rs. 510 to Rs. 570. And in all these years, the interesting thing is that the prices recommended by CACP were announced by the Government as they were. In 1994-95, CACP recommended Rs. 470 and the Government announced Rs. 470. In 1995-96, CACP recommended Rs. 490 and the Government announced Rs. 490. In 1996-97, CACP recommended Rs. 510 and the Government announced Rs. 510. In 1997-98, CACP recommended Rs. 550 and the Government announced Rs. 570. That was a rise of Rs. 60 and a hike of 11.8%. This year, CACP recommended Rs. 625 and we have announced Rs. 650, that is, a rise of Rs. 80 and we have hiked it by 14%. So, this is a record. There is a greater problem in case of jute I will revert back to copra later; I am reversing the order. Dr. Biplab Dasgupta has rightly pointed out that West Bengal has 70 per cent share in the area and 77 per cent in production of jute. And the productivity is also the highest in case of West Bengal. The CACP formula is based on the steps which I have enumerated. It generates its own data and it does average-out and the weightage average of CACP for this year was Rs. 670. Though the recommendation made by it was Rs. 625 because the CACP takes reference to certain other factors, like international prices, the market price movement during the last year, the price support operation which can be provided, the end-product and demand and supply naturally. So, having reference to all these things, the CACP recommended Rs. 625, but we have raised it to Rs. 650. The West Bengal Government has asked, I think, for Rs. 810/-, but I don't have the details whether they asked it abruptly giving cost break-up or breakdown. The crux of the matter is whether the real support is provided to the farmers or not. Unfortunately, whenever the prices have gone below the minimum support price in the past some years, the JCI has failed to provide its support. That is the unfortunate part and the reasons are more unfortunate and painful. The JCI was asked to start this operation in 1972, but not a proper Ordinance or say, notification, was issued. It was issued only in 1980. Then it became statutory. Till then it was taking up these operation in a small manner. But, since then the JCI has developed a good infrastructure to provide its support. They have established market centres; they were mopping up in the market a good amount of jute and they had been effective in certain areas. But for the past several years, Rs. 57 crores which have been incurred by JCI by way of losses while providing support to the farmers in this market intervention operations, have not been reimbursed by the Textile Ministry. At some point of time, I think in 1992-93, a decision was taken, surprisingly, by the that the Jute Corporation of India would not sell in the market, all its stocks would be procured by the NJMC which is another public sector company. The jute which has been supplied by the JCI to NJMC has not been paid for by the NJMC and the arrears amount to Rs. 210 crores. Therefore, the capacity of the JCI stands totally hampered. All these operations have totally got paralysed, but we are taking this up. This has been discussed in the Cabinet. Coming back to the legacy which we have inherited, this is the story. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs had taken a decision not once but several times that these arrears should be reimbursed, but no action has been taken between one department of the and another. So, this is of greater importance.

So far as your question of higher prices in the market and the rationale of declaring a minimum support price lower than the market price is concerned, I must make it clear..... (*Interruptions*)..... Just a minute. I am just responding to that.

DR. BIPLAB DASGUPTA: My question was not that My question was in those years when the prices in the market were much higher, why did you allow JCI to engage in commercial activity?

SHRI SOMPAL: Who am I to allow? They don't have the resources to do that.

DR. BIPLAB DASGUPTA: You should provide that.

SHRI SOMPAL: I have undertaken that we will rectify the situation. I am just describing the situation which we have inherited. But sometimes, prices do go up and the minimum support price is not the maximum price which the farmer is supposed to receive. The farmer is supposed to receive much more than the minimum support price. This is the lowest cutting edge. Below that the prices should not be allowed to go. This is the job of the JCI. This is the objective of any support operations. This is the situation but in the present situation as we have inherited, this was the best we can do and we will see that these arrears are cleared and JCI gets empowered to undertake operations in a more meaningful manner and they do come out with support.

Coming to copra, unfortunately, CACP does not generate its own data to calculate but it depends on the data supplied by two State Governments, Kerala Government and Karnataka Government. Again, the parameters and the reference are demand and supply, international prices and other things. Last year, the prices had been quite high and this year they are just slightly above last year's mimimum support price.

About problems like rootwilt disease, unfortunately, no solution has yet been found even by researchers. They are working on it. The only programme which they have identified and which they have tried to put across is that all the trees suffering from rootwilt disease should be undone and replantation, fresh plantation should be undertaken. But, there has been some demand from the farmers, not from the Government, for coming out with a rehabilitation package. This is what is needed in case of copra. This exercise of evolving scientific-economic formula has been given to the kerala University. They are coming out with a report soon and I think, by next year we will have a scientific-economic formula according to which the cost of copra will be decided and cultivation and producing copra can be undertaken. So far, there is no scientific and economic basis. Broadly, these cost parameters are supplied by Kerala Government and Karnataka Government and the CACP goes by that formula.

So far as import is concerned, copra is not imported in large quantities into India, not even coconut oil. Other oils, yes, are imported. But this is, again, a matter of policy to be looked into. The palm-oil and other edible oils are being imported but what is the impact of those edible oils and coconut oil? it is different. But, there is a need for allaying the apprehensions on account of health impact of coconut oil. Mr. Samadani has pointed out something and it is a very important thing. The Institute of Nutrition at Hyderabad and other institutions can take up this project and we would see that the impact is studied scientifically instead of indulging in any propaganda which is not based on scientific research.

Again, the minimum support price declared in the case of copra has been more than the CACP recommendation. In the case of milling copra it was Rs. 2, 860, we had decided to make it Rs. 2,900 and in the case of other, Rs. 3,125 in place of Rs. 3,100. This was the best which we could do and in this case Nafed, as I have already remarked, will be required to conduct support operations and Nafed is being asked to enter into market operations because the price stand is showing a decline and Nafed is also being asked to stock copra and not off-load it into the market because the impact will be nullified. This is the maximum we could do and we have undertaken. Thank you, Sir. (*Interruption*).

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Madam .....(*Interruptions*).....

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): Mr. Vayalar Ravi, he has given a reply to all the questions and queries raised by the hon. Members. I have to proceed to the Statement by the Minister regarding the situation caused by the cyclonic storm .....(*Interruptions*)..... There is one more business. It will be difficult (*Interruptions*) We have to pass the Bill. (*Interruptions*)

AN HON. MEMBER: It can even be taken up after five o'clock tomorrow. (*Interruptions*)

DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR (Andhra Pradesh): Madam, the Home Minister has gone to Gujarat to assess the situation. Let the hon. Minister come tomorrow and give a statement on that. We can know the latest situation. (*Interruptions*)

9.00 P.M.

सदन के नेता (श्री सिकन्दर बख्त): मैडम, स्टेटमेंट आज करवा लें, क्लेरीफिकेशन मैम्बर्स कल पूछ लें।

†[شری سکندر بخت: میڈم اسٹیٹمنٹ آج کروالیں۔ کلیریفیکیشن ممبرس کل پوچھ لیں۔]

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Why? (*Interruptions*)

SHRI SIKANDER BAKHT: Because it is already 9 O' clock. .....(*Interruptions*).....

SHRI RAJUBHAI A. PARMAR (Gujarat): More than three thousand people have died in Gujarat .....(*Interruptions*).....

SHRI SOMPAL: I am ready with the statement. .....(*Interruptions*).....

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): According to the Business listed before me, I find that there is a statement to be made by the Minister on cyclone in Gujarat .....(*Interruptions*)..... Thereafter, the Members may seek clarifications. .....(*Interruptions*)..... I have seven names before me .....(*Interruptions*)..... Thereafter we have to take up the Electricity Regulatory Bill, 1998. .....(*Interruptions*).....

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Tomorrow .....(*Interruptions*).....

PROF. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA (Delhi): Why tomorrow? .....(*Interruptions*)..... This should be taken up today itself .....(*Interruptions*).....

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): I have a supplementary agenda also before me .....(*Interruptions*).....

DR. BIPLAB DASGUPTA: Madam, as far as our party is concerned,.....(*Interruptions*).....

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): Dr. Dasgupta, please take your mike.....(*Interruptions*).....

DR. BIPLAB DASGUPTA: Madam, as far as our party is concerned, we would like a discussion on the cyclone in Gujarat.....(*Interruptions*)..... This is a very serious issue. A large number of people have been killed.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Why? (*Interruptions*)

SHRI SIKANDER BAKHT: Because it is already 9 o'clock. .....(*Interruptions*).....

SHRI RAJUBHAI A. PARMAR (Gujarat): More than three thousand people have died in Gujarat.....(*Interruptions*).....

SHRI SOMPAL: I am ready with the statement.....(*Interruptions*).....

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): According to the Business listed before me, I find that there is a statement to be made by the Minister on cyclone in Gujarat.....(*Interruptions*)..... Thereafter, the Members may seek clarifications.....(*Interruptions*)..... I have seven names before me.....(*Interruptions*)..... Thereafter we have to take up the Electricity Regulatory Bill, 1998. .....(*Interruptions*).....

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Tomorrow.....(*Interruptions*).....

PROF. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA (Delhi): Why

†[ ]Transilteration in Arabic Script

tomorrow?.....(*Interruptions*)..... This should be taken up today itself.....(*Interruptions*).....

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): I have a supplementary agenda also before

There should be a statement on this issue. If Mr. Advani can provide some more information tomorrow, it would be fine. So, now we should have a discussion on the cyclone in Gujarat and the Members who will be participating in this may be more careful about the time constraint. They can limit their comments.....(*Interruptions*)..... But, this is to be discussed first.....(*Interruptions*)..... As far as Electricity Bill is concerned, we have some serious reservations about it. We do not want this to be moved today.....(*Interruptions*)..... I would suggest that we may discuss it tomorrow.....(*Interruptions*).....

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): Now, what is the decision of the House?.....(*Interruptions*).....

श्री विष्णु कान्त शास्त्री (उत्तर प्रदेश): मैडम, आज इलैक्ट्रीसिटी बिल हो जाये और चूंकि माननीय लाल कृष्ण आडवाणी जी कल आएंगे, तो वह विस्तार से कल सूचना दें। हमारे मित्र बिप्लव बाबू चाहते है कि उनकी बात पर विचार हो तो ठीक है एक-साथ विचार होना चाहिए कि यह गुजरात का विचार कल हो जाए और इलेक्ट्रिसिटी बिल पर आज हो जाए। ...(**व्यवधान**)...

SHRI RAJUBHAI A. PARMAR: Why should it be delayed?.....(*Interruptions*)..... Thousands of people have died in Gujarat.....(*Interruptions*).....

श्री विष्णु कान्त शास्त्री: अगर हों तो दोनों आज ही हो जाएं, चाहे रात के 12.00 बजे तक बैठें। ...(**व्यवधान**).... दोनों आज ही करेंगे। ....(**व्यवधान**)....

SHRI RAJUBHAI A. PARMAR: Five thousands people have died in Gujarat.....(*Interruptions*)..... Why are you postponing it for tomorrow?.....(*Interruptions*).....

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): Let me hear this side also.....(*Interruptions*).....Please sit down.....(*Interruptions*).....

SHRI JOHN F. FERNANDES (Goa): Madam, you go by the List of Business.....(*Interruptions*)..... The name of the Minister is not there in the List of Business.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): Mr. Fernandes, I have the Revised List of Business before me.....(*Interruptions*).....

SHRI JOHN. F. FERNANDES: Madam, this cannot be divided like this.....(*Interruptions*).....

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): I have already said about the Electricity Bill.

PROF. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA: Madam, I would like to suggest that the listed agenda should be taken up as it is. Let there be the statement and clarifications thereon. We fixed 2½ hours for this purpose in the meeting of the Business Advisory Committee.....(*Interruptions*).....

It has been decided by the Business Advisory Committee ...(*Interruptions*)...

DR. BIPLAB DAS GUPTA: We have serious objections to it ...(*Interruptions*)...

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRIMATI SAROJ KHAPARDE): Dr. Biplab Das Gupta, Mr. Salve says something else ...(*Interruptions*)...

SHRI N.K.P. SALVE (Maharashtra): Madam, I do not want to put the Government in any difficulty. We are here to push it through. But, it was agreed by our leaders that we will sit until 10 O'clock. There are two matters before you. One is the statement on situation caused by the cyclonic storm in Gujarat and the other is the Electricity Regulatory Commissions Bill. Members on my side are very highly agitated on the Gujarat situation. They want the statement to be made, and that itself will take about 50 to 55 minutes. Then, after 10 o'clock it will be very unfair to take the Electricity Regulatory Commissions Bill. It is a very important matter. So,

that can be discussed tomorrow so that we can have some degree of seriousness ...(*Interruptions*)...

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): If the House so desires, I do not mind. Sompalji, please make your statement on the Gujarat situation. ...(*Interruptions*)...

श्री विष्णु कान्त शास्त्री: मैडम, ...(व्यवधान)..

उपसभाध्यक्ष (कुमारी सरोज खापर्डे): शास्त्री जी, एक सदस्य के कहने से तो नहीं होगा, सारे सदन की जो राय है, वही होगा। ...(व्यवधान)...

No, no, this is not fair. Mr. Minister, please make the statement.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

Situation caused by the cyclonic storm in Gujarat, Maharashtra and Rajasthan

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): Madam, I seek leave of the House to make a statement on the situation caused by the cyclonic storm in some parts of the States of Gujarat, Maharashtra and Rajasthan. A deep depression was formed on June 5, 1998 around 600 km. South-west of Goa which crossed over to Gujarat coast near Porbandar in the morning of 9th June, 1998 (0900 hrs (IST). The Indian Meteorological Department had constantly been monitoring the movement of the system and was in regular touch with concerned State Governments. Thirteen cyclone warning bulletins were issued between 5th and 9th June by IMD through AIR and Doordarshan.

According to the latest information received from the Government of Gujarat, 637 persons have lost their lives in the districts of Kutch (428), Porbandar (19), Jamnagar (135), Junagadh (5), Bhavnagar (1), Amreli (1), Banaskatha (3), Surat (1), Bharuch (2), Rajkot (37), Valsad (4), and Nalsari (2). 850 persons received injuries and were hospitalised. 104 persons are missing. Due to wind velocity of 70 to 150 km/hr., the microwave tower collapsed in Probandar city resulting in disruption of telecommunication system. Many electric poles, telephone poles and trees have fallen. National Highways are operating normally. There have been some reports of road blockage and damage in remote areas. 64 relief camps have been opened and over 27,000 persons given shelter in the districts of Kutch, Jamnagar and Junagadh. The State Government is taking all necessary rescue and relief operations in the affected areas. According to the Government of Rajasthan, 5 persons have died in Barmer district and one in Jallore district. 4 persons have reported to be injured in Jallore district. Some parts of the districts of Barmer and Jodhpur received rainfall between 125 to 240 MM, causing damage to electric lines, uprooting about 150 poles and some trees, besides killing some heads of cattle.

According to the Govt. of Maharashtra, two fishermen are reported missing in Ratnagiri district.

Two columns of Army in Jamnagar and three columns in Porbandar assisted the civil authorities in rescue and evacuation of people from marooned areas, providing medical aid and distribution of food packets. 5 helicopters have also been positioned at Jamnagar and Bhuj. The petroleum installations like pipeline, tanks have also suffered considerable damage in Kandla. The Ministry of Petroleum has constituted a Task Force to monitor on daily basis the restoration of operations at Vadinar/Kandla and ensure maintenance of uninterrupted supply of petroleum products. The Power Minister Shri R. Kumaramangalam, has directed the Power Grid Corporation of India Limited to put at the disposal of the Gujarat Electricity Board its services, equipment and personnel for emergency restoration on transmission lines. Hon'ble Home Minister, Shri L.K. Advani is visiting the affected areas in Gujarat to review the relief and rehabilitation measures.